

[p. 119a]

Sierra Tarascans

793 tributions. For some time before this visit, rockets were fired off at noon and at 3 p. m. and the church bells were rung about 3:45 p. m. This was to call people to confess in anticipation of the Bishop's visit.

575 794 Another activity, about which little is known, is in connection with the various societies. As indicated previously, there seems to be a degree of secrecy about the functions of these groups; undoubtedly they are primarily religious. For example, on January 3, the day of the Sacred Heart, members of the Society of the Sacred Heart spent the day in church. They wore red bands about their necks with ornaments of red ribbons and spent much of their time kneeling and in group prayers led by a maestro or lay reader. There is also reason to believe that the new priest, at least, used these groups for political purposes. Scarcely a day passed without one group or the other being summoned to a meeting at church by means of special signals on the church bells.

The majority of the people in town belong to one society or another. Rarely or never do they belong to two. The societies of Saint Joseph and of Mary are for boys and girls, respectively; when they marry they are dropped from membership. Adults belong to the other societies. Membership is by invitation only. Each society has a board of directors (*mesa directiva*) which issues the invitations. All meetings are held in the church or in the priest's quarters.

794 578 798 There can be little doubt that Cherán is a strongly Catholic community. During the height of the conflict between the Church and the Government, when priests were forbidden to officiate and the churches were closed,²⁴ Cherán residents underwent considerable risk to bring a priest to the town periodically. Many of the services were held in a private house belonging to a certain Cherán resident who was later in bitter conflict with the new priest who arrived in 1940. The minority in the town who were opposed to Church domination in political affairs did not dare to speak openly. 794 578 Quotation of a statement given me by one of

²⁴ It will be recalled that this restriction was imposed when the Church refused to permit priests to obey the new laws requiring them to register. The real point of the conflict, of course, was in those aspects of the laws which prohibited Church schools and stripped the Church of all economic rights.

771 is seen not only in their behavior but also
668 in the fact that their ideas about cargos
[782] are changing. Whereas for the traditional-
ist, cargos are a necessary service to God
in order to reach heaven, some Catholics
oppose this idea. They say it is only
custom, an unnecessary expenditure of
money, not required to be a good Catholic,
and they are supported by the priest.
When discussing this point, Manuel has a
ready argument: "Do you have cargos in
Mexico City? You don't have them
there, but people are still good Catholics."

[773] Myths and experiences with the super-
natural are usually believed, and some-
times even wonder stories, but the attitude
of doubt described before is also found.

Although agraristas or radicals dismiss
folk beliefs as superstitions, the prevalent
pattern by which folk beliefs disappear is
not through lack of belief but by some
sort of explanation within the accepted
ideology as to why behavior based on the
disappearing belief is not found any more.
Thus we see in belief the same trend as in
the cult, where the tendency is toward a
more orthodox Catholicism. Examples fol-
low:

539 In Zopoco there are no rich men because the
town Christ "does not allow the *japinguas* to
operate", i. e., compacts with the Devil.

• • • • •

754 Jarácuaro used to be famous as a center of
778 witchcraft. Prospective witches entered a cave
538 behind the Church to make a compact with
the Devil and learn their art. The present lack
of witches is attributed to the fact that the
entrance to the cave has been covered: "Form-
erly there were witches because God allowed
it. Now he stopped it. What there are now are
some magicians who learn in books, but God
does not allow many of them. Otherwise with
so many books as there are, there would be
many magicians and all of them would be
causing evil."

• • • • •

776 Elves are no longer seen because the Pope
539 condemned them together with other devils to
go back to hell; and they have not been seen
thereafter.

• • • • •

821 In Cocúcho there were many thunderstorms
539 over a certain mountain. "A priest went and
783 blessed a cave in the mountain. A thunder-
storm destroyed the cave. They said many
people were seen leaving the mountain; they

821 were crying and saying people did not care for
539 them any more; they went to Tierra Caliente."
783

. . . .

339 "Nowadays a dead man's finger is no longer
[778] good. In olden times it was useful because
miracles still were possible. Now it is all finished, or maybe they were saints? Who knows?"

668 In this Catholic group, the people who have the most contacts with the outside world are not, like the agraristas, those more closely related to the government or school, but those who attend sinarquista rallies even as far away as Morelia or Guadalajara, or send boys to study for the priesthood. Like the agraristas, they are more closely connected with national life than the traditionalists, but they represent a different kind of allegiance to national institutions.

. . . .

182 The folk culture of the Tarascan communities has been characterized economically and socially and the main traits of the folk religion have been described. To the extent that the local communities have an economic and social life independent of the external world, an ideology of its own is typical of the folk culture. It is associated mainly with unorganized religion and the celebration and organization of the local Catholic cult. To the extent that the local community is part of a wider society

771